

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

SEPTEMBER 14, 2009

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Rob Caruso (Co-Chair), Girard Plante (Co-Chair), Jane Brown, Jini Fairley, Jeff Hutter, Barbara Lischinsky, Heather Platt
REGRETS: Lucie Chansky, Rosemary Larking, Jason Rosenberg, Kathleen Cahill (Planning & Dev.)
STAFF: Beverly Droz (Human & Vol. Services)
GUESTS: Maryan Amaral

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The meeting was called to order at 6:40pm and chaired by Rob Caruso.

MINUTES

A **motion** was made by Jane Brown and seconded by Heather Platt to approve the minutes from August 17, 2009. The motion was approved unanimously.

HANDICAPPED PARKING - Bev

Handicapped Parking around the City

Alderman Freedman made a general request on behalf of Paul Rubin for consideration of additional on-street handicap parking spaces in village centers, particularly Newton Centre. Rob noted the difficulty is where the handicapped spaces are to be placed. In Nonantum, it is difficult to park, the get out of the vehicle and into a wheelchair due to the narrowness of the street. There was general discussion that the request is vague and it is up to the Traffic Council to determine where HP spaces are appropriate and needed. Certainly MCPD can weigh in on specific locations. For this request, MCPD recommends that they evaluate Newton Centre and consider adding two spaces to the triangular public parking lot in Newton Centre.

Review of 15 Madoc Street

The owners of the house at 15 Madoc Street requested handicapped parking. A review of the property indicates that a handicapped space is warranted but that the regulations may not allow for it to be designated in the place he wishes. This is up to the Traffic Council's decision but given the circumstances of this couple, the MCPD supports it.

PLAYGROUND REPORT - Bev

A resident requested that the MPCD look into several park areas that have/may have inaccessibility issues. On 9/11/09, Bev and Stephanie Pelkowsky from the Parks & Recreation Department went on site visits to the following parks and Bev presented this report.

Burr Park

On the Waverly Street side, there have been no renovations to the equipment. The swing structure is about 40 years old. The Tot Lot is about 16-17 year old. Timbers were put down 6-7 yrs ago, but it wasn't renovation, it was for safety purpose. It has mulch. There are no CDBG funds for here. On the Park Street side, there was some CDBG funding for the path roadway up to the building (but not further to the play area described in 1st paragraph). There are handrails at the steps and an accessible path to the field to watch games and access to the building. In the

building there are accessible bathrooms. There is no current plan to make the whole park accessible.

Farlow Tot Lot in Chaffin Park

It used some CDBG funds. Parks & Recreation know they have to have an accessible route. They are working on the design plan and getting cost estimates (due in about 4-6 wks). They are considering pads or a rubberized surface that would go from gate along the inside of the fence to the right hand play equipment. They do not feel it can go to the central play area because of the slope on the other side (which leads down to the 2nd gate on the Eliot Church property). They do not expect to put it to the swing at the far left end.

Playground on River Street

An old playground, this has not had any recent renovations. The swing seats were replaced but that is general repair for safety issues. There is a walkway to the swing area but then it drops down several inches. There are weeds and mulch. There is a walkway to the play equipment area but that area has sand; it always has. It's not accessible.

Mason Rice Elementary School playground

From handicapped parking spaces, there's an accessible pathway to playground behind school. At the first play structure, an olden wooden one, a ramp is part of the structure and provides accessibility within this larger structure. The PTO put in larger accessible playground structure about 5-6 years ago. It is also accessible with tile surfacing.

Newton Centre Playground

A woman and her committee raised all the money for this Universal play structure model. The surfacing was 70% of the costs. It took a while to plan and build due to swamp areas, etc. The accessible pathway from Mason Rice Elem. School leads right to it. The path was paid for by Parks & Recreation and continues further to the bottom area of the field at the corner of Bowen Street.

Obviously it would be a shorter route if there were an access route from Bowen Street. This access route has been in planning for a while due to costs because of the hillside. Bev learned that the goal is to have handicapped parking spaces on Bowen St., and an accessible path to meet up with the end of the one coming from Mason Rice.

Discussion

Bev noted there are 40 parks across the city and the goal is to have them all accessible. There is not funding to just do that. The City works on them and prioritizes them. The majority of parks have mulch. Mulch received funding until a few years ago. Rubberized surfacing is very expensive; ADA guidelines state firm surface but don't specify exactly what kind.

Maryan particularly noted the Farlow Tot Lot since it is new, used CDBG funding and needs an accessible path. She said pine bark mulch is inaccessible. She brought up the inaccessible entrance on the church side and Bev said it is church property so Parks & Rec doesn't have jurisdiction there. Rob noted that the material they used on the walkway at Crystal Lake at Livingston Cove was a good surface. Maryan noted that the handrails at Burr Park do not meet code, and next to the building in this park, there is a set of newer stairs that doesn't have handrails. Bev will check back in with Parks & Rec to see how their plans are proceeding.

SNOW ISSUES

Guest Alderman Vicki Danberg was slated to appear and discuss sidewalk snow issues but was in absentia. The Committee briefly discussed the sidewalk snow issues. We'll invite Ald. Scott Lennon to our next meeting. Bev noted that a coalition of groups is forming to address "safe routes" and the more diverse it is, the more chance we'll have to make progress on this front.

OTHER BUSINESS

Blind Resident's Letter

Ms. Jodoin's letter regarding the issues facing blind residents was discussed. Ms. Jodoin states that there are many problems with her being unable to cross streets due to people not stopping at the crosswalks. There are problems with sidewalks and trees not being maintained by homeowners or storeowners that have resulted in her walking into dangerous conditions and being hit in the face by tree branches.

Heather called and talked to Ms. Jodoin and told her that blinking lights at these non-lighted intersections will not stop traffic. There needs to be a police officer but there aren't the funds for it. Heather explained the best route to her, which is the lighted intersection of Newtonville and Harvard near the Whole Foods. There should be another stoplight but there isn't. Another problem area is the intersection of Beacon and Centre Streets.

Ms. Jodoin brought up the sidewalks around the commuter rail, especially in Newtonville. She was told by Dept. of Public Works (DPW) that they plow these areas when in fact she states they do not. This is a concrete example that can be cited during our discussions with DPW. There was frustrated discussion about the lack of progress on this issue.

Ms. Jodoin stated that the rule for no pets in stores affects her as she needs her service animal with her. In some stores, people can bring in their small dogs which then produce a distraction to her service animal because they either bark at it or come after it. Regarding the dog issue, it was agreed that the storeowners need to be educated about it and that the stores would be in violation of health codes by allowing pets other than service animals in the stores. Bev will email Health Commissioner David Naparstek about it.

Removal of Debris

Barbara Lischinsky has been calling Dan at DPW for four weeks about the removal of slippery debris that is constantly in front of one residence and his fence on Route 16 near the hospital. It is very dangerous and she is afraid of slipping into the main thoroughfare. If DPW is so unresponsive, it was suggested alerting the police about this matter.

Publicity of these issues

Jini noted the best ways to educate the public about their responsibility and these important issues could include writing a letter to the TAB, utilizing New TV and making public service announcements.

A motion passed to adjourn at 8:05 pm.

The next meeting will take place on Monday, October 19, 2009.

Respectfully submitted by Beverly Droz